

workers' truth

Toward the International Party of Revolutionary Workers

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The liberation of the workers
can only be the deed of the
working class itself.

10 cents

INFLATION

Why No Government Can Stop It

Rampant, uncontrollable inflation has become a harsh and inexorable reality in every country in the world: from poverty-stricken countries like India and Portugal, whose governments have recently announced stringent anti-strike and wage-freezing measures, to "prosperous" expanding economies like those of Germany, America and Japan. Already entire national economies seem to be on the verge of collapse -- Italy for example -- and governments are falling like nine-pins as they reveal their inability to solve the problems of inflation and impending bankruptcy.

The dizzying ascent of prices is everywhere accompanied by the hysterical shriekings of the capitalist class and their media. Every day this or that politician, industrialist, archbishop, economist or journalist stands up and points his finger, blames his opponent for the catastrophe and offers up his own explanation for inflation, and his own "solution".

The explanations and solutions are innumerable. But we workers can be sure of two things. The diagnoses the bourgeoisie gives us for its ailing system will all be wrong; and they will all be used one way or another to try to mystify, divide and attack the working class.

A number of learned, "scientific", "neutral" economists solemnly inform us that world inflation is the result of the rising prices of raw materials -- oil, foodstuffs, etc. which leads to increased production costs; which is a complicated way of saying prices rise because of a rise in prices! Undoubtedly the rise in oil prices after the Middle East war has contributed dramatically to inflation, but it has MERELY ACCELERATED A PROCESS WHICH WAS ALREADY RAPIDLY GATHERING PACE.

The political partisans have a different approach. The old style "conservative" factions of the bourgeoisie blame inflation on the excessive demands of "greedy" workers who by asking for ridiculously high wages, force the responsible, patriotic (not-greedy) bosses to put their prices up.

This "explanation" is a joke to all those millions of workers who have been fighting a rearguard battle merely to KEEP UP with inflation in the last six or seven years. It fails to explain why prices soar even when wages are held down by the state; it fails to explain why inflation was still raging in the fifties and sixties when wage-

struggles were at a very low level; and it fails to explain why, in the nineteenth century, inflation was almost unknown even though real wages increased at rates far higher than they ever have done in the twentieth.

The real purpose of arguments of this type is to try and bludgeon the working class into accepting the responsibility for the crisis and acceding to wage-cuts and other attacks on their living standards, in the name of the "national interest" -- which always means the interests of capitalism's profits.

The left-wing, "progressive", "socialist" factions of capital -- Social Democrats, Communist Parties, Trotskyists, etc. have another explanation. Because they are a capitalist faction which depends on working class support, they usually blame inflation on greedy bosses deliberately hiking up prices to increase their profits, in particular the big multinationals who appear to be outside the jurisdiction of any nation-state.

Of course this or that capitalist will put up his prices to increase his profits if he can. But prices can't be fixed arbitrarily. Changes in prices are determined by the needs of capitalist competition. In order to compete, the capitalists have to UNDERCUT their competitors, not go on raising their prices. And in any case they cannot manipulate prices indefinitely because they must be ultimately based on production costs (i.e. the amount of labour time spent in production) if the capitalists are to make any profits at all.

The basic aim of these arguments is to win the working class to the Left's "solution" to the crisis: the replacement of private bosses by the state acting as a collective employer: STATE CAPITALISM, more or less as in Russia, China, Yugoslavia, etc. But state capitalism changes nothing as far as the workers are concerned and as we have recently seen in Chile, Allende's nationalized economy was completely unable to avoid the inflationary spiral and now the "socialist" governments of East Europe have been forced to admit the existence of serious inflation in their economies. In fact the maintenance of a huge unproductive state bureaucracy can only serve to increase each national economy's skyrocketing inflation. In the end, the left's arguments are exactly the same as the right's: both demand that the

working class accept austerity measures and increased exploitation in the interests of NATIONAL CAPITAL whether it is disguised as "duty to the fatherland" or "building socialism".

Every party of capital presents inflation as a problem of this or that national economy, a problem of bad national management. The implication is always that the criticizing party would make a better set of managers. And indeed this is the only "alternative" each capitalist faction can offer, whether it does it through "democratic" elections or violent coups d'etat. The capitalist class is organically incapable of putting forward the real causes of inflation, and its real solution: because that would imply their own destruction as a class.

THE REAL CAUSES OF INFLATION

The truth is that no capitalist management, party, or government can do anything to prevent inflation. Inflation today is nothing less than a direct and inescapable product of the world-wide crisis -- the irreversible HISTORIC crisis not of this or that nation but of the whole capitalist world system -- the system of WAGE-LABOR and PRODUCTION FOR EXCHANGE.

As Marx showed a long time ago, every system of production based on class divisions is motivated by certain SOCIAL RELATIONS which in one period of history allow the system to expand, and in a later period themselves become barriers to further expansion.

Just as, in previous historical periods, the contradictions of Roman slave society, and then of feudal society, led to their decline and disappearance as modes of production, so for the last 60 years the contradictions of capitalist society have produced the decline of capitalism, and now threaten its total collapse.

In the decline of slavery and feudalism, the attempts of those systems to solve their INSOLUBLE contradictions produced phenomena which are no less apparent in 20th century capitalism: the growth of a huge totalitarian state machine, and incessant wars. These in turn were the basic causes of the inflation which ravaged decadent Rome and declining feudalism, just as they are at the root of inflation under DECADENT capitalism.

When capitalism was still a progressive, expansive system of production (19th century) the steady growth of

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technological sophistication and productive capacity led to a corresponding decline in prices: the more commodities capitalism could produce in a shorter and shorter time, the cheaper they were. In that period the working class was capable of winning lasting reforms through its struggles -- such as a continued rise in real wages -- which did not lead to economic crises and inflation, but on the contrary were a positive factor in the expansion of the system.

In this century, however, despite the unprecedented productive capacity of capitalism, inflation has been a constant thorn in the side of the system. Commodities can be produced faster but they don't become cheaper. Wage rises won by a section of the working class in one area are quickly gobbled up by price rises in another. Whether it trots along steadily, or gallops as it does today, inflation has become a fact of the system's life.

The reason for this is that under capitalism, production is not directed towards the fulfillment of human need, but towards the accumulation of profit. The capitalists (whether private owners or state bureaucrats) make profit through the UNPAID labor time which they extract from the working class at the point of production, and which is embodied in all the commodities the working class produces. But in order to make that profit real they have to sell those commodities. The working class, taken as a whole, can only buy back a certain portion of the commodities because by definition, it is only paid for a certain quantity of the work it performs. Neither can capitalists sell all their commodities to each other. Consequently, capitalism AS A WHOLE is always left with an overall surplus product which must be sold on a market OUTSIDE the relationship between capital and labor. If these markets are not found, a crisis of OVERPRODUCTION is the result.

In the 19th century, the need for new markets forced the capitalist system to grow ever outwards from its original enclaves in Western Europe towards the rich and huge pre-capitalist sectors of the world which still existed in that epoch. The periodic crises of overproduction in that century served to spur forwards the outward growth of capital, and on the whole, capital accumulation took place progressively and peacefully (apart from the rape and plunder of the non-capitalist world) because there were always new markets to be found.

But by the beginning of the 20th century, the whole world had become capitalist, or at least directly subject to the laws of capital. Instead of being able to come together to divide up the non-capitalist world, the great imperialist powers were faced with a largely saturated world market, and confronted each other as rivals for the markets which still remained. Henceforward new markets could only be found by stealing them from competitors. The first imperialist world war therefore marks a turning point in the history of capitalism. From now on, WAR has become an absolute necessity for the continuation of the system. Ever since 1914 whether in the form of direct global confrontation or of local wars backed up by the major powers, there has been an unending succession of wars between capitalist blocs.

War is a necessity for decadent capitalism because only through war can the markets of other capitalist powers be seized; and the devastation of war allows the creation of temporary "new" markets stimulated by the demands of

post-war reconstruction. Capitalism today has a permanent crisis of overproduction relative to available markets -- the more its productive capacity grows the greater the crisis. But so far the outbreaks of the crisis this century have been "solved" by war and the reconstruction afterwards. Thus the world crisis of the thirties was relieved through the massive destruction of men and machinery which took place in World War II, creating a boom which is only now coming to an end, from 1967 onwards.

But wars are fantastically expensive, and no amount of speed-ups, and overtime can meet the immense costs imposed by industries whose sole aim is destruction, or the debts incurred by countries which are waging major national wars. In fact the bill for world war II can never be met; and every country in the world has been forced to print more money than is accounted for in real value, (which is derived ONLY from productive labor) to try to meet the costs of this and other wars.

In addition to these unimaginable costs, decadent capitalism is forced by its permanent crisis of overproduction to literally waste vast amounts of its productive capacity on goods and services which themselves are unproductive: armaments, space programs, etc. because this is a way for the capitalists to "burn up" the surplus that they otherwise can't get rid of. They are forced to create gigantic advertising industries to try and create "new" artificial markets; and, like Rome under the "divine" Emperors, they have to construct vast state bureaucracies, which exist in every country from China to the U.S.A., simply to prevent the whole creaking system from falling apart, and above all to keep the working class in check and keep capital's profits running.

Today capitalism's PRODUCTIVE sector -- productive capital and the working class -- is having to support a monstrous UNPRODUCTIVE sector, which costs billions and spends billions but adds no new value to social production. The sheer expense of keeping this sector going has devastating effects on the price of commodities. When we go into the shops to buy, say, a jar of coffee, we are not just paying for the necessary and useful work embodied in that product -- the agricultural workers who pick the coffee beans, the dockers and seamen who transport it, the canners and grinders who pack it. We are also paying for the innumerable capitalist armies, policemen, officials, advertising executives, who exist solely to control the working class and to keep the market system going. IN THIS WAY WE THE WORKERS ARE PAYING IN THE SHOPS FOR THE SYSTEM THAT EXPLOITS US IN THE FACTORIES, LIES TO US ON T.V., AND KILLS US IN ITS WARS.

But although these unproductive sectors are at the root of inflation, capitalism cannot get rid of them. They are absolutely vital to its survival and have been for the whole of this century. Capitalism cannot live without wars, without waste production, without state despotism (hidden or open) and yet these very things are dragging capitalism down to its doom. The system is being torn apart by its own contradictions. THEIR SOLUTION AND OURS

In the long run, therefore, capitalism cannot solve the problem of inflation. But this will not prevent the capitalists from fighting with every weapon they have to keep their system spluttering on till the end. (Even though this end means, if left to them, the end of humanity).

In every country in the world, capi-

tal, through its organs (the state, political parties, trade unions) is beginning its counter-revolutionary offensive. Each national capital is preparing itself for the deepening crisis, for the tightening of the rat-race with other capitalist powers. It is seeking by every means it has -- whether brute force or ideological mystification -- to tie each sector of the world working class to "their own" exploiters. The capitalists are preparing austerity measures and wage-freezes, and other ways of attacking the working class. BECAUSE WE CAN BE ABSOLUTELY SURE THAT WE THE WORKERS WILL BE ASKED TO FOOT THE BILL FOR THEIR CRISIS.

But even increasing exploitation only deepens the overall problem of overproduction, if not for individual capitals then for capital as a whole. Already informed sectors of the bourgeoisie are recognizing the necessity for a RECESSION to halt the inflationary spiral. That means a falling off of production, layoffs, permanent unemployment -- in short further massive attacks on our living standards. And a new depression can only be a prelude to the capitalist's "final" solution -- a new world war. The first moves are already being made: local inter-imperialist conflicts in Indo-China, the Middle East, Africa, Cyprus, cynical "detentes" between the big imperialist states, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., China, etc. No one should doubt that the prospect of a world war which would destroy capitalism itself is not enough to prevent the headlong rush of capitalism towards war. BY ITS VERY NATURE THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM IS BLIND, AND THE CAPITALIST CLASS AS A WHOLE IS INCAPABLE OF SEEING INTO THE FUTURE.

Against all the preliminary attacks of the capitalists, we workers must resist. We must fight all the mystifications of capital from left to right and defend our living standards with our own autonomous class struggle, relying only on ourselves.

But mere resistance, defensive action, is not enough. We must recognize the fact that real wage increases simply cannot be accommodated by capitalism today. They will be quickly eaten up by inflation, or else the capitalists will simply refuse to give them. We must understand that we are rapidly approaching the point where no compromise between the classes is possible: the capitalists are preparing to attack us directly with austerity measures, dictatorship and wars, and in order to defend ourselves we will have to launch our OFFENSIVE against them. We will have no choice but to unite as an international class and

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The Crisis in Britain

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A PHONEY WAR?

One of the most important aspects of recent events in Britain has been the way in which the working class responded to the concerted attack on its living standards. The working class has been unwilling in any systematic way to go beyond the institutions containing it. Over the last year or so, with certain exceptions, it has been confined within the sectional constraints set by the state, the unions and the shop stewards. Relativities, "phased" austerity and the state's anti-picket tactics (such as prison sentences) have so far gone unchallenged by the working class as a whole.

The overall effect of the recent draconian measures, in the absence of a systematic class response, has been to prepare the working class for the acceptance of the greater austerity promised by all parties in the election. Though none of the major parties wished to lose the election none were too happy with the thought of winning it either, simply because the problems of the economy are so obviously less and less amenable to their control. Since British capital is so weak it must sway with the economic wind blowing in from the rest of the world market. What it can do is concentrate on increasing exploitation at home. Recent events can be described as a kind of quasi-confrontation. We have a situation where neither the working class nor the ruling class are really prepared to take the other on at the moment. The reason is not stupidity or a "lack of leadership" but simply that the cards are not yet all on the table and the stakes are not known -- the crux of the matter is that **THE CRISIS IS NOT DEEP ENOUGH**.

This situation will not remain static. The crisis cannot be "frozen" and whatever happens in the short term, it will deepen. As it does the phoney war will end with one side or the other thrusting for some significant advantage and then the working class will have to break through its sectionalist confines and assert itself on a political level.

In this epoch any serious struggle inevitably comes up against the government of the day. But while in fact the government party is merely **ONE** face of the state, the working class does not see its struggle as one clearly and explicitly against the state itself. A fight between a fraction of the class and the ruling party is only taking sectionalism onto another level, obscuring the fact that these different parties represent nothing but different factions of capital. As long as the "opponent" is seen as one bourgeois party the illusion lingers that another one is better, even if only marginally so. The notion that a different party in power holds out meaningful alternatives for the fraction of the class in struggle is dangerous; recently Buckton, the ASLEF general secretary, got the railwaymen's strike called off before the election with the palliative that under Labour it would be satisfactorily settled. To make significant advances the class will have to break through this mystification and confront the state itself, recognising it for what it is: the final bastion of the power of capital.

PROSPECTS

Consider the manner in which the international working class has reasserted itself in response to the present crisis. It moves in sudden, thrusting, chaotic and unconnected waves as, for example, in France in May/June 1968, in Argentina in 1969 and in Poland in 1970. There are both historical and conjunctural factors determining the state of this movement.

Historically, since 1914 the class has had no permanent organisation of its own; those that existed before that time were either destroyed or integrated into the functioning of the state as counter-revolutionary agencies. Fifty years of material and ideological pounding through world war, counter-revolution, slumps and "booms" since the last revolutionary period have kept the class atomised and fragmented. These immense burdens are now being slowly discarded by the new undefeated generation of workers; but since the class can now only organise in struggle, the limitations of the epoch dictate that the new movement cannot grow and strengthen itself in any continuous or regular way.

The conjunctural determinant which gives this present wave of struggle its particular character is the slow and uneven development of the crisis itself, and despite a maturation of eight or nine years it still has a long way to go. We have described how this crisis is gathering on a global scale, but the fact that it is global does not mean that each national capital is affected simultaneously. This unevenness is amplified by the efforts of each national capital to use the state and numerous financial mechanisms to stave off or divert the effects of the crisis; and these measures in turn have enabled most fractions of the ruling class to avoid brutal repression **SO FAR**.

The relationship between the crisis and the level of struggle is neither immediate nor direct however; they do not develop together in a harmonious way. Neither is there any guarantee that the achievement of some level of militancy or consciousness at some time precludes fallbacks and retreats later. For example, the militancy of the working class reduced last year although the crisis had deepened compared to the previous two years.

With these objective conditions -- both historical and conjunctural -- weighing heavily on the consciousness of the working class an enormous chasm lies between the atomised class struggling in sectional ways and the revolutionary class whose task it is to make the communist revolution. To understand how this chasm is to be bridged we have to understand how the class sees itself and its predicament. Recent events in Britain provide a starting point. Why, given the militancy of the past few years, has the British working class clung to so many illusions, accepted such severe austerity measures and been so disarmed by the recent elections?

The class has entered the crisis with all the illusions of sectionalism gathered over a fifty year counter-revolutionary period. It has illusions about unions, shop stewards, political parties, nationalism and the nature of the state itself. Time and time again, the class has carried such illusions into its struggles, but it is now coming to realise through practice that these struggles do not in fact lead

Part Four

where they were expected to lead -- to an amelioration of the working class condition. The class is therefore ambivalent about what to do now, an ambivalence partly reinforced by the suspicion that recent austerity measures are but a taste of what is yet to come.

Through its experience over recent years the working class has shed some of these illusions, though as yet this has been in an incomplete way. For example, the working class has learned about the trade unions and their role, yet the unions have been able to constrain the class within a general acceptance of Stage 3; the working class has suffered under both major parties and learned something of what their policies mean for the class, and yet struggles were slackened off for the election charade. This contradiction is the expression of a dilemma facing the class and a hesitation in response to it. For the working class recognises that the methods it has used up to now have not advanced its position -- so it feels the need to transcend the limitations. But at the same time it fears the serious implications of taking the struggle onto a higher level -- so it crawls back. Yet the crisis is forcing it again and again to face this dilemma. For example, in a limited way the working class has become aware that every serious struggle has led to confrontation with the government of the day; to go forward implies taking a path that would involve facing up to the state in a self-conscious way; not to do this implies a further worsening of the working class condition. So the present hesitation indicates that the working class is not yet ready to take the decision which will lift the struggle onto an explicitly political level.

Certainly the class is cynical. But this cynicism is not sufficient to break with these illusions -- there is still the hope that somehow without having to make that painful break, the condition of the class can be relieved within capitalism. These illusions act as a refuge and the class will not leave its present framework of struggle until there is no more refuge to be found. **CYNICISM** cannot produce revolutions -- only **NECESSITY** can. And this necessity will only be brought by the deepening of the crisis, when the condition of the class becomes so intolerable that, more and more, the refuge offered by the unions and the Labour Party and all the palliatives offered by the bourgeoisie are seen to be not just empty facades but instruments to attack the class and imprison it, as a class, within capitalism. Only in this process can the struggle break out of sectionalism and into direct confrontation, not just with a section of the bourgeoisie, but with the entirety of **CAPITAL** itself.

On an international scale the working class will more and more assert itself against the effects of the deepening crisis, but it will not mature in a steadily progressive way. Sometimes sections of the class will break out of its confinements and assert itself in a more independent way, yet still in a partial way. Sometimes it will retreat back into old illusions, some of which it had previously discarded. It will have successes which enhance its morale and consciousness, and some successes will in fact

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Elections vs. the

This appeal was signed and distributed by WORLD REVOLUTION, WORKERS' VOICE and REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES. It was distributed in response to the recent British elections.

ELECTIONS AND THE CRISIS

Once again the electoral circus is back in town. As the economists gloomily predict 2 million unemployed and massive rates of inflation in the coming winter, the politicians realise the urgent need for a stronger government to try to deal with the crisis. So for the second time in a year, the various clowns of capital are wheeled into the ring, from the crass racialists of the National Front on the right, to the "revolutionary" prima donnas such as Tariq Ali and Vanessa Redgrave on the left, with the almost indistinguishable buffooneries of Heath, Thorpe, and Wilson in between.

Right, left and centre - all of them sing the same tune. They all blame the crisis on rival capitalist factions (on "Tories" or "communists", "Big Business" or "Unions") and they all offer themselves as "better" defenders of the national interest, as better managers of the national economy.

None of the parties standing in the election can comprehend the real cause of the crisis, of the slump in trade, of unemployment and inflation, not to mention the endless coup d'etats and wars all over the world. The crisis is not some passing difficulty of this or that country but a WORLD crisis of the capitalist system itself, which is hitting every country in the world including the state capitalist ones (Russia, China, etc.). It is not something that can be put right by better managers because by its very nature the system is outside human control, regulated by blind market forces, by the insane compulsion of capitalism to produce things not for people's needs but solely to SELL them and accumulate profit. It is not a crisis that can be solved in one nation states on the contrary it is the division of the world into competing nation states defending their national capital which is at the root of the crisis and has been since the first World War.

The only way the capitalists can begin to deal with the crisis is to attack the living standards of the working class, to make us work harder for less money, so that their economies can compete more effectively on the world market. But the sharpening of competi-

tion on a world scale, already apparent in the numerous trade and shooting wars all over the world, is only the lead in to capitalism's "final solution" to the crisis. Just as in the 1930's, the dramatic deepening of the crisis is pushing the system towards a new WORLD war, even though a third World War could mean the end of civilisation.

But even though capitalism has only one ultimate solution, the boss class has more than one tactic for confronting the only force which stands in its way: the world working class, whose struggles everywhere in the last few years have shown that it is not prepared to pay for the crisis. In Britain today the elections reveal the ruling class's various proposals for dealing with the workers.

The thick-headed right wing of capital, the National Front, the mad colonels Stirling and Walker, the Powellites, are already looking for a showdown with the working class, attacking it in the crudest possible way, with racialism, with threats of brutally smashing strikes, and so on. But as in other countries (Portugal, Greece, etc.) the more "progressive" bosses, realising the level of militancy in the working class, have understood the need to offer the workers the carrot and not the stick at this stage. This is the precise role of the Labour Party, the TUC, and their left-wing appendages (Communist Party, Trotskyists). The left has the function of exploiting the workers' illusions that these are "workers" parties and of trying to cajole the working class into VOLUNTARILY accepting attacks on its living standards. This is the meaning of Wedgewood Benn's plans for nationalisation and "workers participation", which seek to give the workers the idea that the economy "belongs" to them even while it exploits them more and more. This is the meaning of the Labour-TUC "social contract" which seeks to sabotage the resistance of the workers and tie them to the unions and so to the state of which the unions are a vital part. For only if the bosses can tie us down in this way can they begin to introduce the austerity measures - lay offs, wage freezes, cuts in welfare, increased state regulation of production - which the crisis will sooner or later force every capitalist government to impose. But only the left can hope to disarm the workers before attacking them.

THE ROLE OF ELECTIONS

The elections must be seen as a vital

The British Labour Party and other organizations of other classes will come into power. It is for them to build up the forces that will overthrow the patriots, and in this country or falter in that work.

We must not dissipate the strength of the Labour Party. Power is inevitable. We must win a communist movement. The Labour Party will soon be ready to attack it...

Sylvia
1920



"Right, left and centre - all

The methods of nationalisation not only fail to produce results but also cease to make any sense, because the workers' backs of the parliamentary armed force, reduces the power of the workers to ever greater successes in the world market.

weapon in this attack. Time and again the elections have been used by the capitalist class to obtain a so-called "mandate from the nation" to mount its offensive against the workers. Particularly in times of crisis such as now, elections serve:

* to divert the attention of the workers

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Working Class

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--Leon Trotsky
1914

from the real cause of the crisis
and to mobilise it behind contending
fake alternatives, to defuse the
class struggle by means of idle
promises, especially by the left.
That is exactly how the railwaymens
and miners' strikes were broken by
the last election. With the unions

rallying behind Labour to sabotage
the strikes, and Labour conceding a
settlement, the miners were made a
"special case" at the expense of the
rest of the class.

- * to reinforce the hold of capital-
ist ideology on the workers - the
lie of the "national interest",
and the belief that the state is
"democratic" and "impartial" when
in fact it is nothing but the ex-
ecutive committee of the ruling
class, which is already preparing
its arms against us (special pol-
ice squads, vigilante brigades,
etc.). The world wide disintegration
of capitalist politics, with its
Watergates and coups, is only em-
phasizing the fact that the bosses
have long ceased to manage their
affairs through Parliament.
- * to undermine our identity as a
class by turning us away from the
only way we can express ourselves
as a class - in collective strug-
gle - and reducing us to a mass of
atomized "citizens", isolated in
the polling booths where we can only
express our powerlessness. Because
of this point, voting for ANY party
or ANY candidate can make no differ-
ence to the working class. The work-
ing class cannot now express itself
through Parliament. Parliament has
always been an instrument of the
capitalist class and in this period
of history there can be no workers'
parties which fight IN PARLIAMENT
for the workers' interests.

THE WORKERS' RESPONSE

Right now we workers must be aware
that elections are part of the strate-
gy of the enemy class. We have to
be aware that the capitalists - whether
right or left - are going to mount an
offensive against our living standards
and we must be prepared to wage an in-
transigent struggle against these at-
tacks, a struggle which must be fought
independently of all the capitalist
agents in our midst - the left parties,
the "working class" fascists, and the
unions. But we must also be aware that
the capitalist system is utterly bank-
rupt and has nothing to offer us by
way of reforms; that for the capital-
ists the only way forward is increas-
ed dictatorship in preparation for a
new world war. And we must recognize
that the working class is the only
force which can prevent this barbar-
ism and free humanity from the yoke of
capital once and for all. The WORK-
ERS' solution to the crisis is the

world socialist revolution which will
abolish wage labour, national fron-
tiers, and the world market, in order
to re-organize production directly
for the needs of the world human com-
munity.

That revolution will be realized
through the destruction of the capi-
talist state in all countries and of
all its organs - armies, police, citi-
zen's vigilante corps, AND parliament
in all its forms. Against the fraud of
bourgeois "democracy" we workers will
create our own organs of struggle, our
own CLASS democracy: the power of the
workers councils, which have appeared
in every genuine revolutionary struggle
of the working class this century. El-
ected by mass assemblies of workers
and recallable at any time, united from
city to city and across national fron-
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Archives of the Revolution



The Mass Strike, A Historical and Not an Artificial Product

ARCHIVES OF THE REVOLUTION is a regular feature of WORKERS' TRUTH. Each month we reprint for the benefit of our readers part or all of a particular speech, article or document from the vast and rich heritage of the revolutionary Marxist movement. In this issue we reprint "The Mass Strike, A Historical and Not an Artificial Product" by Rosa Luxemburg. This is the second chapter of the pamphlet THE MASS STRIKE, THE POLITICAL PARTY AND THE TRADE UNIONS written by Luxemburg in 1906 after the experiences of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Although the unions had not yet become the organs of capitalist mystification and exploitative enslavement that they are today, they still demonstrated a decidedly conservative influence over the working class at the time Luxemburg was writing. Likewise the German Social-Democracy which was not to demonstrate its total bankruptcy until the outbreak of the first imperialist

world war in 1914 showed its preference to reformist activity when in 1906 it repudiated Luxemburg's interpretation of the Jena resolution on the general or mass strike by claiming that the Jena resolution was in complete agreement with the trade union position against the mass strike for anything other than parliamentary pressure purposes. Despite her ill-based faith in the leadership of German Social-Democracy and its resolutions, Luxemburg's analysis of the mass strike is worth reading for every militant worker. In recent months the various Trotskyist groups have been living examples of exactly what Luxemburg attacks in her pamphlets: parliamentarians who wish to turn the general strike on and off like a water faucet to be used as a pressure tactic on capitalist legislative bodies (see for instance the Spartacist League call for a defensive general strike in Britain at the time of the last elec-

tions in March or the demands of various Trotskyist groups for a general strike to force new elections after the Watergate scandal here in the US). Luxemburg's words stand as a clear repudiation of these "leaders" of the left whose actions serve only to bolster the capitalist system and keep the working class tied to the capitalist ideology of parliamentarism. Neither the electoral farces of capital nor the blustering general strike calls of the Trotskyists will serve the needs of the working class. Only the working class fighting as a class through workers' councils of its own creation and under its own leadership can carry out the tasks assigned to it by history if it is to go forward and break out of the morass of this rotting system: international revolution and the abolition of wage-labor and all classes.

The first revision of the question of the mass strike which results from the experience of Russia relates to the general conception of the problem. Till the present time the zealous advocates of an "attempt with the mass strike" in Germany of the stamp of Bernstein, Eisner, etc., and also the strongest opponents of such an attempt as represented by, for example, Bomelburg, stand, when all is said and done, on the same conception, and that the anarchist one. The apparent polar opposites do not mutually exclude each other but, as always, condition, and at the same time, supplement each other. For the anarchist mode of thought is direct speculation on the "great Kladderatsch" (havoc--WT), on the social revolution merely as an external and inessential characteristic. According to it, what is essential is the whole abstract, unhistorical view of the mass strike and of all the conditions of the proletarian struggle generally.

For the anarchist there exist only two things as material suppositions of his "revolutionary" speculations--first imagination, and second goodwill and courage to rescue humanity from the existing capitalist vale of tears. This fanciful mode of reasoning sixty years ago gave the result that the mass strike was the shortest, surest and easiest means of springing into the better social future. The same mode of reasoning recently gave the result that the trade-union struggle was the only real "direct action of the masses" and also the only real revolutionary struggle--which, as is well known, is the latest notion of the French and Italian "syndicalists". The fatal thing for anarchism has always been that the methods of struggle improvised in the

air were not only a reckoning without their host, that is, they were purely utopian, but that they, while not reckoning in the least with the despised evil reality, unexpectedly became in this evil reality, practical helps to the reaction, where previously they had only been, for the most part, revolutionary speculations.

On the same ground of abstract, unhistorical methods of observation stand those today who would, in the manner of a board of directors, put the mass strike in Germany on the calendar on an appointed day, and those who, like the participants in the trade-union congress at Cologne, would by a prohibition of "propaganda" eliminate the problem of the mass strike from the face of the earth. Both tendencies proceed on the common purely anarchistic assumption that the mass strike is a purely technical means of struggle which can be "decided" at pleasure and strictly according to conscience, or "forbidden"--a kind of pocketknife which can be kept in the pocket clasped "ready for any emergency", and according to decision, can be unclasped and used. The opponents of the mass strike do indeed claim for themselves the merit of taking into consideration the historical groundwork and the material conditions of the present situation in Germany in opposition to the "revolutionary romanticists" who hover in the air, and do not at any point reckon with the hard realities and the possibilities and impossibilities. "Facts and figures; figures and facts!" they cry, like Mr. Gargrind in Dickens' HARD TIMES.

What the trade-union opponent of the mass strike understands by the "his-

torical basis" and "material conditions" is two things--on the one hand the weakness of the proletariat, and on the other hand, the strength of Prussian-German militarism. The inadequate organization of the workers and the imposing Prussian bayonet--these are the facts and figures upon which these trade-union leaders base their practical policy in the given case. Now when it is quite true that the trade-union cash-box and the Prussian bayonet are material and very historical phenomena, but the conception based upon them is not historical materialism in Marx's sense but a policemanlike materialism in the sense of Puttkammer. The representatives of the capitalist police state reckon much, and indeed, exclusively, with the occasional real power of the organized proletariat as well as with the material might of the bayonet, and from the comparative example of these two rows of figures the comforting conclusion is always drawn that the revolutionary labor movement is produced by individual demagogues and agitators; and that therefore there is in the prisons and bayonets an adequate means of subduing the unpleasant "passing phenomena".

The class-conscious German workers have at last grasped the humor of the policemanlike theory that the whole modern labor movement is an artificial arbitrary product of a handful of conscienceless "demagogues and agitators".

It is exactly the same conception, however, that finds expression when two or three worthy comrades unite in a voluntary column of nightwatchmen in order to warn the German working class against the dangerous agitation

of a few "revolutionary romanticists" and their "propaganda of the mass strike"; or, when, on the other side, a noisy indignation campaign is engineered by those who, by means of "confidential" agreements between the executive of the party and the general commission of the trade unions, believe they can prevent the outbreak of the mass strike in Germany.

If it depended on the inflammatory "propaganda" of revolutionary romanticists or on confidential or public decisions of the party direction, then we should not even yet have had in Russia a single serious mass strike. In no country in the world--as I pointed out in March 1905 in the SACHISCHE ARBEITERZEITUNG--was the mass strike so little "propagated" or even "discussed" as in Russia. And the isolated examples of decisions and agreements of the Russian party executive which really sought to proclaim the mass strike of their own accord--as, for example, the last attempt in August of this year after the dissolution of the Duma--are almost valueless.

If, therefore, the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it teaches us above all that the mass strike is not artificially "made", not "decided" at random, not "propagated", but that it is a historical phenomenon which, at a given moment, results from social conditions with historical inevitability. It is not therefore by abstract speculations on the possibility or impossibility, the utility or the injuriousness of the mass strike, but only by an examination of those factors and social conditions out of which the mass strike grows in the present phase of the class struggle--in other words, it is not by SUBJECTIVE CRITICISM of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is desirable, but only by OBJECTIVE INVESTIGATION of the sources of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is historically inevitable, that the problem can be grasped or even discussed.

In the unreal sphere of abstract logical analysis it can be shown with exactly the same force on either side that the mass strike is absolutely impossible and sure to be defeated, and that it is possible and that its triumph cannot be questioned. And therefore the value of the evidence led on each side is exactly the same--and

that is nil. Therefore the fear of the "propagation" of the mass strike, which has even led to formal anathemas against the persons alleged to be guilty of this crime, is solely the product of the droll confusion of persons. It is just as impossible to "propagate" the mass strike as an abstract means of struggle as it is to propagate the "revolution". "Revolution" like "mass strike" signifies nothing but an external form of the class struggle, which can have sense and meaning only in connection with definite political situations.

If anyone were to undertake to make the mass strike generally, as a form of proletarian action, the object of methodical agitation, and to go house-to-house canvassing with this "idea" in order to gradually win the working class to it, it would be as idle and profitless and absurd an occupation as it would be to seek to make the idea of the revolution or of the fight at the barricades the object of a special agitation. The mass strike has now become the center of the lively interest of the German and the international working class because it is a new form of struggle, and as such is the sure symptom of a thoroughgoing internal revolution in the relations of the classes and in the conditions of the class struggle. It is a testimony to the sound revolutionary instinct and to the quick intelligence of the mass of the German proletariat that, in spite of the obstinate resistance of their trade-union leaders, they are applying themselves to this new problem with such keen interest.

But it does not meet the case, in the presence of this interest and of this fine, intellectual thirst and desire for revolutionary deeds on the part of the workers, to treat them to abstract mental gymnastics on the possibility or impossibility of the mass strike; they should be enlightened on the development of the Russian Revolution, the international significance of that revolution, the sharpening of class antagonisms in Western Europe, the wider political perspectives of the class struggle in Germany, and the role and the tasks of the masses in the coming struggles. Only in this form will the discussion on the mass strike lead to the widening of the intellectual horizon of the proletariat,

to the sharpening of their way of thinking, and to the steeling of their energy.

Viewed from this standpoint however, the criminal proceedings desired by the enemies of "revolutionary romanticism" appear in all their absurdity, because, in treating of the problem, one does not adhere strictly to the text of the Jena resolution. The "practical politicians" agree to this resolution if need be, because they couple the mass strike chiefly with the fate of universal suffrage, from which it follows that they can believe two things--first, that the mass strike is of a purely defensive character, and second, that the mass strike is even subordinate to parliamentarism, that is, has been turned into a mere appendage of parliamentarism. But the real kernel of the Jena resolution in this connection is that in the present position of Germany an attempt on the part of the prevailing reaction on the parliamentary vote would in all probability be the moment for the introduction of, and the signal for, a period of stormy political struggles in which the mass strike as a means of struggle in Germany might well come into use for the first time.

But to seek to narrow and to artificially smother the social importance, and to limit the historical scope, of the mass strike as a phenomenon and as a problem of the class struggle by the wording of a congress resolution is an undertaking which for shortsightedness can only be compared with the veto on discussion of the trade-union congress at Cologne. In the resolution of the Jena Congress German social democracy has officially taken notice of the fundamental change which the Russian Revolution has effected in the international conditions of the proletarian class struggle, and has announced its capacity for revolutionary development and its power of adaptability to the new demands of the coming phase of the class struggle. Therein lies the significance of the Jena resolution. As for the practical application of the mass strike in Germany, history will decide that as it decided it in Russia--history in which German social democracy with its decisions is, it is true, an important factor, but, at the same time, only ONE factor amongst many.

... INFLATION from page 2

to dismantle the whole repressive apparatus of capital -- government, armies, police, unions, etc. In order to avoid a continual degradation of our living standards which can only result in a catastrophic new war. We will have to destroy the ROOTS of the crisis: the capitalist mode of production, the profit motive.

Only when the revolutionary working class has destroyed once and for all the whole system of wage-labor, commodity production, money and nation-states, will the immense productive forces evolved under capitalism be used to the advantage of humanity. In a socialist system of production solely for human needs, production and distribution planned by the freely associated producers of the whole world,

... LAYOFFS from page 8

it means nationalization and union control. But the end result of this can be seen in Russia today: state capitalism, the concentration of exploitation at the hands of a brutal state apparatus. This is not socialism by a long shot, but the logical conclusion of capitalist development, the

machinery and technology will no longer be used to increase exploitation, ravage nature, and murder human beings. Instead it will be used to obliterate the misery and poverty in which capitalism imprisons humanity, to free us all from mindless drudgery and from the continual suppression of our potential as human beings.

The first free society in history, or the destruction of civilization. Socialism or barbarism. Such is the alternative posed by the capitalist crisis. For the world proletariat there is only one choice, only one way forward: the world proletarian revolution and the final abolition of classes.

--by C.D. Ward (WORLD REVOLUTION)

concentration and centralization of capital, state capitalism, the form of capitalist organization in its decadent and imperialist phase.

For us, however, socialist policies are completely different. For us a socialist policy is the destruction of the capitalist state machinery: army, police, courts, cabinets, congress,

... BRITAIN from page 3

only reinforce mystifications. It will have failures which demoralise it and failures which teach it great lessons. Sometimes the locus of heightened struggle will be in one part of the world and sometimes in another; sometimes isolated and sometimes linked up.

However, despite all the surges and ebbs of the tides of developing consciousness the gradual deepening of the crisis will guide the activity of the working class towards its historic goal -- THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

Concluded

unions, etc., abolition of wage labor, the means of our enslavement, destruction of the market, all carried out not by a "worker president", but by workers' councils, independently organized as working class organs of struggle against capital and all of its institutions.

To be continued

FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!

The world we live in is a world where people are divided into classes according to their role in production. The two major classes in society are the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalists own the means of production (factories, machines, etc.) but produce nothing. The workers, on the other hand, receive only meager wages for the sale of their labor power to the capitalists. Almost all production in society is done by the workers. However, almost all the benefits from this production go to the capitalists. The basis for production in this society is profit. The capitalists are not interested in having the workers produce things that people can use or that people need. They are only interested in what makes them the biggest profit. Thus, while the capitalists get richer and richer, the workers are worse off than they were before.

In order to increase profits the capitalists resort to all sorts of techniques which most of us are familiar with: speed-up, wage cuts, unemployment, labor-saving machinery. While, for instance, labor-saving machinery would be progressive in a society run by the workers, it does nothing under capitalism but throw them on the dole. It is just another attack on the working class.

Another feature of capitalist society is war. Every day there is a war going on somewhere in the world. This is due to the necessity of the capitalists to wage war in order to get ahead of the capitalists in other countries. The working class has no interests in supporting these wars. What the workers want is peace. However, there can be no peace until the capitalists and their system have been removed from power and replaced by a society run by the workers on an international co-operative basis.

To do this, it is of no use electing people to Congress or as President. The

government is nothing more than the executive committee of the ruling class. It is the owners of the big corporations who have the final say as to what goes on. It is necessary to organize our own workers' councils. The councils will be the class rule of the workers after the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. When capitalism goes Congress will go with it. All the democracy surrounding Congress is just a sham to keep us tied to this system. It is democracy for the rich, for the capitalists. Our democracy will be real democracy, proletarian democracy, the democracy of the many. We do not simply want a workers' government, we want a workers' republic.

In the process of waging the class struggle, the working class develops the revolutionary class consciousness necessary for carrying out its task of destroying the capitalist social order and replacing it with an international co-operative order of all producers, socialism. The acquisition of revolutionary class consciousness does not, however, occur simultaneously throughout the class as a whole. Some workers will see the need for a revolutionary struggle against all the institutions and mystifications of capital (e.g. elections, unions, united fronts, national liberation movements) before the rest. It is necessary for these revolutionary workers to organize themselves into a revolutionary party so as to carry out a coherent, centralized COMMUNIST intervention into the struggles of their class. The purpose of this intervention is not to set themselves up as "leaders", but to pose the necessity of generalizing isolated struggles into a classwide struggle against the capitalist system. While such a party is both democratic and centralized, it is not "democratic-centralist" in the Leninist sense of an artificial "iron discipline". On the contrary, its centralization comes from the living ideological link

of its cadre. It is not a party of "leaders" and "masses", with the "rank and file" following "the line"; it is an organization of revolutionary communist workers, whose fundamental ideological and programmatic agreement enables them to carry out coherent centralized intervention on the basis of the fullest democracy. However, it is not enough to build such a party here in the United States. Capitalism is a world system. Even so-called "Communist" Russia and China are capitalist (state capitalist). In order to wage a successful worldwide struggle against capitalism, the workers' struggle and the revolutionary workers party must be international. It is as part of the process of the development of the International Party of Revolutionary Workers that the Revolutionary Workers Group and WORKERS' TRUTH exist.

In 1917 the Russian workers, organized in revolutionary soviets (workers' councils), seized power under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party.

However, the revolution was isolated due to the failure of the revolution in Western Europe, and the Russian workers, exhausted from the hard struggle in a backward country, lost power as the Bolsheviks more and more substituted their authority for that of the working class, until the point was reached in 1921 where the Bolsheviks and the working class stood on opposite sides of the class line. However, despite the defeat of the workers in 1921, their struggle and victory in 1917 remains, along with the Paris Commune of 1871, as a beacon for workers throughout the world.

Under capitalism we workers are nothing more than menials. We deserve a better life. We deserve socialism. However, it will not be handed to us on a platter. We must fight for it. For if we do not fight for socialism, we will be handed barbarism. Socialism or barbarism? FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!

Layoffs and the Left Part One

Layoffs are becoming more and more an inevitable fact of life as the capitalists seek to "rationalize" production by squeezing the most work out of the fewest workers. No doubt the tempo of layoffs will continue to increase as the government steps up its "war on inflation". A war that is really a war on the working class's standard of living. Most of the government economic advisors feel that the only way to fight spiralling inflation is to throw people out of work. Thus, Congress is passing a multitude of bills that come to a grand total of nothing as far as solving unemployment and layoffs is concerned.

But if the palliatives of Congress are clearly of no benefit to us, what about the proposals of the Left? Does the Communist Party, the various Maoist groups and that myriad of Trotskyist sects have anything better to offer? Can they provide the solution to our problems? The answer is a clear, unequivocal and emphatic NO. All of these groups, just like the Democrats and Republicans, base themselves on the continued functioning of the present economic system, a system that is crumbling into total political and economic disarray, not only in the unstable "third-world", but also in North America and Western Europe and those bastions of "socialism" the Soviet Union

and China. Clearly the solution to our problems, the problems of the international working class, do not lie in some reform or alteration of the present system, which for the last 60 years has shown that it can breed nothing but war, decay and increased exploitation and oppression.

Like the Democrats and Republicans, these so-called "socialists", who are nothing more than the extreme left-wing expression of the system that exploits us, place their faith in the institutions of capitalist society: Congress, president, unions. They are currently raving that Ford and Rockefeller are causing unemployment (before that it was Nixon, always the administration, not the system itself). This we can clearly see is utterly absurd. As powerful as the president may be, and as powerful as Rockefeller may be, they are not magicians who are able to turn unemployment on and off at will. They, like us, are prisoners of the fundamental objective laws of motion of their own economic system. The difference being that they benefit from their imprisonment, while ours is like being in the New York Tombs or the Cook County Jail. In blaming unemployment on Ford and Rockefeller the Left stands arm in arm with the Democratic Party. Like the Democrats, they think that a different administration could

solve the problem. To further the confusion they infer that unemployment is increasing under Ford and Rockefeller partly because they weren't elected! Preposterous! All past presidents have been elected (at least as vice-presidents) and we have always had unemployment. The fact of the matter is that capitalism can not survive without unemployment in some form or another, be it bread lines or slave labor camps. So whether or not we elect a few "friends of labor" to Congress or even a "friend of labor" as president, layoffs and unemployment will continue to plague us so long as the capitalists have to use them to keep their system spluttering along.

But according to the Left (and particularly the Trotskyist factions) things would be different if a party based on the unions ran the government (or as CP boss Gus Hall put it: put a worker in the White House). However, we need only look at England to see how a "workers' government" functions in capitalist society. The British workers today are no better off than they were under the Tories; and things aren't getting any better.

The Leftists, however, claim that we need a "workers' government" pledged to "socialist policies". Just what are "socialist policies"? For the Leftists,

continued on page 7